

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 SAA-02 A-01
OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 MCT-01 /102 W
-----030372 061150Z /50

O P 061104Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8570
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3749

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE, CASC
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: JULY 6, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 3720 (DTG 051049Z JUL 78)

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS' JULY 5 TRIP TO
DAMASCUS ENDED IN FAILURE AS SYRIAN SHELLING OF EAST BEIRUT
RESUMED WITH WHAT L'ORIENT LE JOUR CALLED UNPRECEDENTED
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FEROCITY. PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL DERIDED THE GOV-
ERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION AND SAID "ALL OUR
HOPES ARE NOW PINNED ON GOD AND OUR PARTY." BOTH CONSERVA-
TIVE AND LEFTIST MUSLIM PARTIES CONDEMNED CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S
STATEMENT CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ADF. AT LEAST
TWO HIGH PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT BROKE THE SOUND BARRIER OVER
BEIRUT. END SUMMARY.

2. BOUTROS MISSION FAILS.

FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS' JULY 5 TRIP TO DAMASCUS ENDED IN FAILURE. BOUTROS REFRAINED FROM COMMENTING ON THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS TALKS, TELLING REPORTERS ONLY THAT "SYRIA IS AS PAINED AS WE ARE ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION." MEANWHILE, PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL HOSS HAS ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO VISIT DAMASCUS ON JULY 8, THE PRESS REPORTED.

3. MORE HEAVY FIGHTING.

A. AT 2000 HOURS JULY 5, SOME TWO HOURS AFTER BOUTROS' RETURN FROM DAMASCUS, HEAVY SYRIAN SHELLING OF EAST BEIRUT RESUMED. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR SAID "IN BEIRUT'S MEMORE THIS VIOLENCE WAS NEVER SEEN, NOT EVEN IN THE WORST MOMENTS OF THE TWO YEARS WAR." PHALANGE VOICE OF LEBANON CLAIMED THERE HAD BEEN 167 PEOPLE KILLED AND 500 WOUNDED IN THE FIGHTING SINCE JULY 1.

B. THE INTENSITY OF THE FIGHTING DIED DOWN SOMEWHAT AT ABOUT 2400 HOURS BUT RESUMED MORNING OF JULY 6, AND CLASHES ARE CONTINUING AS OF 1300 HOURS, JULY 6. ONE ROUND, PROBABLY MORTAR, FELL IN THE VICINITY OF THE CHANCERY. DANY CHAMOUN TOLD DATT JULY 6 SYRIAN SOLDIERS HAD KILLED FOUR CIVILIANS BETWEEN BEIRUT AND JUNIYAH ON JULY 5. CHAMOUN FEARED THIS

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COULD ONLY LEAD TO SPREADING OF FIGHTING. HE NOTED THERE HAD BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT FIGHTING OUTSIDE THE BEIRUT AREA TO DATE.

C. ACCORDING TO DATT SOURCES, SYRIANS ARE REINFORCING AND CONSOLIDATING THEIR POSITIONS AROUND EAST BEIRUT IN WHAT MAY BE PREPARATION FOR A GROUND ASSAULT. REUTERS REPORTED THAT ONE OF ITS CORRESPONDENTS OBSERVED SOME 800 SYRIAN TROOPS MOVING NORTH FROM SIDON IN TRUCKS AND ARMORED VEHICLES, INCLUDING ARTILLERY PIECES AND ROCKET LAUNCHERS. (ACCORDING TO DATT SOURCES, 6,000 SYRIAN TROOPS ARE ALREADY ENGAGED IN THE BEIRUT AREA.)

4. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS SOURCES, ASHRAFIYAH AND OTHER PARTS OF EAST BEIRUT CONTINUE TO BE COMPLETELY ISOLATED, WITH THE SYRIANS BLOCKING ALL ACCESS IN OR OUT. IN SOME AREAS, THERE HAS BEEN NO ELECTRICITY SINCE JULY 3 AND ALMOST NO OUTSIDE TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS. SOME OF THE INHABITANTS STILL IN THE AREA HAVE BECOME CONVINCED THE SYRIANS INTEND TO STARVE THEM INTO SUBMISSION. THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR WAS ATTACKED BY AN UNKNOWN GANG AT HIS RESIDENCE IN THE SURBURB OF HADATH.

5. GEMAYEL ON PARTITION. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SAHAFIYAH NEWS AGENCY ON JULY 5, BEFORE BOUTROS HAD RETURNED FROM DAMASCUS, PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL SAID THAT HE EXPECTED NOTHING FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT. "LIKE A SICK MAN WHO HAS TRIED ALL MEDICINES IN VAIN, ALL OUR HOPES ARE NOW PINNED ON GOD AND OUR PARTY," GEMAYEL REMARKED. ASKED ABOUT PARTITION, GEMAYEL REPLIED, "WHEN SOMEONE HITS US LIKE THIS, HOW DO YOU EXPECT US NOT TO TALK ABOUT PARTITION? WHEN THEY STRIKE AT US IN THIS AREA (EAST BEIRUT), THEY HAVE A REGULAR FESTIVAL IN THE OTHER AREA (WEST BEIRUT)."

6. MUSLIMS PRAISE ADF. ON JULY 5, MUSLIM PARTIES RANGING FROM THE CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC GROUPING TO THE LEFTIST INDE-
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PENDENT NASSERIST MOVEMENT (AL MURABITUN) CONDEMNED CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S STATEMENT CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ADF AND STRESSED THAT THE ADF WAS STILL NEEDED IN LEBANON. IN ADDITION, ZGHARTA LEADER FATHER SEEMAN DWAIHI REACTED BY CALLING ON SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD TO PURGE LEBANON OF THE "TERRORIST GANGS" OF THE LEBANESE FRONT.

7. OVERFLIGHTS. AT LEAST TWO HIGH PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT BROKE THE SOUNDBARRIER WHILE MAKING LOW PASSES OVER THE BEIRUT AREA AT ABOUT 1130 HOURS ON JULY 6. SYRIAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT POSITIONS OPENED FIRE BRIEFLY NEAR THE AIRPORT. PARKER

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